



ST. MATTHEWS
Experience God's Family

Sermon Title: **The I Factor**
Sermon Date: **25 September 2011**
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Last week we looked at the X Factor!

We saw that **the X Factor that makes any church successful in its gospel mission is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit and we have to depend on Him to do that and use us in the process.**

And we saw that dependency on the Holy Spirit is a truth that we have to bear in mind in all we do, and that the key way we show our dependence is on God the Holy Spirit is **TO PRAY!** Prayer = “expressed dependency on God”

And out of that, this week at St Matthews, a prayer movement was born called “Totally Dependent” where in our staff meeting and Home Groups we prayed for Holy Spirit help:

1. To understand how dependant on God we are for everything
2. To express that dependency often in prayer personally; at home; in our Home Groups; in our ministries; and together at church
3. To understand how the gospel mission of the church can only be accomplished by Him as He works through us and not by us alone
4. To be willing to be used by Him on this mission
5. To revive our hearts by His Spirit
6. To revive our families by His Spirit
7. To revive our church St Matthews by His Spirit
8. To, by His Spirit and through us, save many people in our homes, neighborhood, town and country

And I don't know if you were part of a Home Group this week but in our Home Group we had an amazing time of prayer!

Also at Staff meeting; Council meeting the week before; I am also encouraging all ministries to express their dependency on God at ministry times (Not just in and out); Prayer Diary coming out; Facebook group → Totally Dependent... can see some pics, comments and amazing quotes and articles). More to come!

Now starting a prayer movement is one thing...

Maintaining it is quite another thing.

Because in the tension between God's Sovereignty and our responsibility lies not only the glorious “X Factor” but also a wasting disease I call the “I Factor”.

To see what the “I Factor” is and how much it affects our dependency on God and living for God... I want us to listen to the words of Jesus and the life He has called His disciples to.

This is the normal call of Jesus on all His disciples but I reckon that for most of us this will look ridiculously fanatical and if so we are beginning to experience the “I Factor”.

Matthew 16: 24

What does this passage mean? (**Discuss**)

Matthew 16: 24 – the nature of Jesus' call on His disciples then and now to follow Him is quite shocking to those of us struggling with “I Factor”. Jesus uses the crucifixion as the metaphor for discipleship. A disciple must:

- Deny him/herself – die to self will
- Take up his/her cross – embrace God's will, no matter what the cost
- Follow Jesus

In other words just like Jesus had to deny Himself and embrace God's will, no matter what the cost:

Read Matthew 26: 36 – 46 (unpack → death on a cross. Start noting the “I Factor”)

And in Matthew 16: 24 we are called to live not for ourselves (that is the “I Factor”) but sacrificially for Jesus as a normal part of being a disciple, a follower of Jesus.

But I suspect that in most, if not all of us, we sense that “I Factor” as a stronger call than Jesus’ call – much like the disciples who were to watch and pray with Him.

There is a self-centred tendency (“I Factor”) in us that redefines the call of discipleship in a self-centred (not self-denying) way that seeks to do God’s will when it is convenient to do (not at any cost).

And this false discipleship

In fact if you go back to Matthew 16: 24 you see this played out and spoken about in the context.

Matthew 16: 21 – 27

- Jesus is the suffering Messiah and He reveals that His disciples must be willing to suffer with and for Him.
- 21 – 23 Jesus and the will of God and Peter with his own will (I Factor) – which is seen to actually be the will of Satan.
- 24 – The call
- Note 3 reasons why we should deny self and take up the cross to follow Him.
- 25 – Jesus saves and those who are saved by Jesus accept His call to live as a follower. Whoever rejects this plan to follow Jesus and sets up their own discipleship plan for their comfort and happiness (reject God’s will and embrace their own – I Factor) ends up losing everything including the very life they are trying to protect.
- 26 – Continuing from 25... **what is the point!** The person pursuing the things of this world (I Factor) at the expense of God’s will for their lives ends up selling out their soul – showing they were never really disciples.
- 27 – When Jesus comes back to judge the world only those who have **done** the will of God – denied self and taken up their cross will receive their reward... not those who knew all about it, had the right theology but never did it because it was inconvenient (I Factor).

What does the “I Factor” look like in our lives?

Well, I think it will look different in different people’s lives.

So in Peter’s life the “I Factor” was to reject the suffering, dying Jesus and what that would mean for him as a follower and rather push for a victorious, politically conquering Jesus who would make his life a pleasure (worked out in his denial later on).

In Peter, James and John’s lives in the Garden of Gethsemane the “I Factor” held up the value of enjoying sleep more than the value of the satisfaction of doing whatever it took to stay awake to pray with and for their Lord.

For some people the “I Factor” means they would rather risk their relationship with Jesus than stand up for Jesus and risk their relationships with family and friends. Read [Matthew 10: 32 – 39](#). And there are many other examples.

What does your “I Factor” look like – I know what mine looks like.

How do we conquer the “I Factor”?

How do we get beyond the wasting disease that makes us desire to please ourselves more than the greater pleasure of pleasing God?

Step 1: We need to understand that we are not able to conquer the “I Factor”. We do not possess the power on our own to do this. As Jesus says in the Garden of Gethsemane, **“The spirit is willing, but the body is weak”**. The “I Factor” which is really another word for sin – “doing things my way not God’s way” (Eden) is just too powerful in us.

Step 2: We need to understand that only God’s Holy Spirit working in and on us will begin the life-long process of conquering the “I Factor”. And for that to begin we confess that we are sinners, call on Jesus to save us from our sin and fill us with His Spirit.

Step 3: We need to understand that even when the Holy Spirit comes to live in us it **is** a life-long process, a joint partnership (with us depending on Him – “X Factor”) to be conquering the “I Factor” so that more and more we can deny self, take up our cross and follow Jesus.

It’s not about perfection here on earth but progress.

And if anyone at this point feels really defeated and disheartened by this message, because when you look at your life you feel like you are failing again and again and that the wasting disease of the “I Factor” is really wasting your life... I want you to know that you are in a good place and really good company and in a great place to change – **Romans 7: 15 – 19; 22 – 25** and note **chapter 8**. Pray and place yourself for progress. Get help.

And if at this point you are so grateful to God that the “I Factor” hasn’t really got you and you get so frustrated with the way people just live for themselves and not for our precious Lord... and boy do they need to hear this message... can I warn you to be careful that you understand that any progress is because of **God’s grace** and not primarily what you do. Let’s remember the “X Factor” and what we read last week **John 15: 5**.

This week – handout.

- It is the Father’s will for Jesus and us
- Jesus’ life and death is the example – might want to read more deeply around that
- The Holy Spirit is your power – pray and take the risk of doing.
- Joy, peace and God’s glory are the fruit – **Hebrews 12: 2**...

Let’s Pray